

Phonics

A Guide for Parents

What is Phonics?

'Phonics' sounds complicated but it is just a way of teaching children to read using sounds.

We teach children:

- the sounds that letters represent.
- how to 'sound out' words and then 'blend' the sounds together to make the word.

44 Sounds of English

Phonics teaching is based on the **sounds** we hear in spoken language.

The English language has 44 different sounds or **phonemes** (which means the smallest unit of sound we can hear).

E.g. If we say the word 'rain', we can hear:

the phoneme '**r**' at the beginning

the phoneme '**ai**' in the middle

the phoneme '**n**' at the end

Letter Sounds

When children are first learning to read, they need to know the letter sounds rather than the Alphabet names.

This is because if you try to read a word using Alphabet names, it doesn't work.

E.g. 'cat'

If you say the alphabet names, C A T, it sounds like "see ay tee" and not sound like the word 'cat'.

We teach children to say the sounds "c- a -t" quickly and then blend them together to make 'cat'.

This video clip shows how to sound out and blend words. Please note that this link will take you to an external website that is not controlled by WEPA.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao5R5Z1pb68>

The Alphabetic Code

In Phonics we are teaching children the **Alphabetic Code**. This is not the same as saying the Alphabet. The Alphabetic Code means learning which letters represent which **sounds**.

We start off by teaching children the sounds that single letters represent.

E.g. **s** **a** **t** **p** **i** **n**

We teach children to read and spell words using these letters.

E.g. **sat** **tip** **pan** **pit**

We then progress to teaching sounds that are represented by a combination of two or three letters. Children then read and spell words containing these letters.

E.g. **sh** as in **ship** **ai** as in **rain**

igh as in **light** **ear** as in **near**

Graphemes

In phonics, the letter or letters representing the sound (phoneme) are called **graphemes**.

E.g. s ch igh are all graphemes

Two letters representing one sound are called a **digraph**.

E.g. ch (**chin**) ai (**rain**) oy (**boy**)

Three letters representing one sound are called a **trigraph**.

E.g. igh (**night**) ure (**pure**)

'Letters and Sounds' Phonics Programme

At Wood End Park Academy, we follow the '**Letters and Sounds**' phonics programme. 'Letters and Sounds' is divided into six phases:

Phase 1

There are no letters at Phase 1. Phase 1 includes lots of listening activities. The aim is for children to be able to **hear** the individual sounds (phonemes) in words and **blend** them.

E.g. if the teacher **says the sounds** 'c-a-t', children can **say the word** 'cat'.

This is called oral blending -it is an essential skill for learning to read.

The clip below shows an oral blending game. Please note that this link will take you to an external website that is not controlled by WEPA.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=141Rj_-uHX4

Phase 2 Graphemes

Phase 2 graphemes are taught in Reception:

s a t p i n m d

g o c k ck e u r

h b f ff l ll ss

We teach that the digraphs **ck**, **ff**, **ll** and **ss** come at the end of words.

E.g. back off full hiss

Pure Sounds

It is easy to add an extra 'uh' sound when saying some sounds on their own. E.g. often people say 'tuh' for the sound 't'.

It is important not to do this as it makes it more difficult for children to blend the sounds into words.

In phonics, we use 'pure' sounds. The clip below demonstrates how to say the pure sounds. Please note that this link will take you to an external website that is not controlled by WEPA.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J2Ddf_00m8

Reading at Phase 2

Children are taught to sound out and blend short words.

E.g. **am** **sit** **cut** **top**

We often put 'sound buttons' on words to remind children to say the sounds.



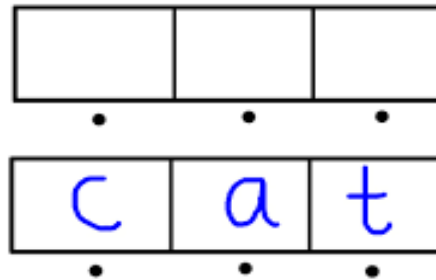
Spelling at Phase 2

Children are taught to 'segment' words for spelling. Segment means to 'chop' the word up into sounds.

E.g. to spell the word 'cat', we need to chop it up into the sounds "c-a-t"

We teach children to count each sound using their fingers.

We can also use phoneme frames to help children remember to write each sound.



Phase 3 Graphemes

Once children know the Phase 2 graphemes, they move onto Phase 3. For most children, this is during their Reception year.

j	v	w	x	y	zz	qu
ch	sh	th	ng	ai	ee	igh
oa	oi	oo	ow	ar	air	ear
er	ur	or	ure			

Pronunciation of the Phase 3 Graphemes

The Phase 3 digraphs and trigraphs are pronounced as in the words shown below:

qu (**q**ueen)

ch (chin)

sh as in **sh**ell

th (**th**umb)

th (**th**is)

ng (**ng**)

ai (**ai**n)

ee (**ee**)

igh (**igh**)

oa (**oa**t)

oo (**oo**n)

oo (**oo**k)

ow (**ow**)

ar (**ar**)

air (**air**)

ear (**ear**)

er (**er**)

ur (**ur**)

or (**or**)

ure (**ure**)

Pronunciation:

This clip includes how to say of these Phase 3 sounds correctly. Please note that this link will take you to an external website that is not controlled by WEPA.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqhXUW_v-1s

Reading and Spelling at Phase 3 and 4

Phase 3

At Phase 3, we teach children to read and spell words using the graphemes they have learnt so far.

E.g. rain seen fight boat moon

Phase 4

At Phase 4, we teach children to read and spell longer words using the same graphemes but containing **adjacent consonants (shown in blue)**.

E.g. **st**rain **sl**leep **fr**ight **st**oat **sp**oon

Phase 5 new graphemes with example words

ay
day

oy
boy

wh
when

a_e
make

ou
out

ir
girl

ph
photo

e-e
these

ie
tie

ue
blue

ew
new

i-e
like

ea
sea

aw
saw

oe
toe

o_e
home

au
Paul

u_e
rule

Phase 6

This is the last phase of 'Letters and Sounds'. For most children, this is taught in Year 2. Children practise reading words containing all the graphemes learnt at earlier Phases.

Phase 6 concentrates on making the correct spelling choice, especially for the long vowels. By this phase, children are learning spelling rather than phonics.

E.g. **dreem** or **dream**?

lite or **light**?

caik or **cake**?

Children are taught spelling rules including how to add suffixes to make longer words:

E.g. stop stops bunch bunches

light lightest heavy heaviest

sleep sleeping play played

Phonics Websites

Please note that these links will take you to external websites that are not controlled by WEPA.

The following websites have some free phonics games for children to play:

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

<http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html>

<http://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/>

The BBC's 'Alphablocks' programme is really good - there are some episodes on youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UU4FKj00mWs>

Also, check out 'Mr Thorne Does Phonics' on youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYCR2RZ4ZYY>